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Calliope

Unhinged Edition



Calliope

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Armstrong Atlantic State University
2013

Calliope

Unhinged Edition

editor: Nicholas Godfrey

editorial board: Deighton Abrams, Dayna Anderson, Nathan Krafft,
Kenneth Pinion, Justin Toney

advisor: Dr. Christopher Baker

Calliope is published annually by and for the students of Armstrong Atlantic State University. The Student Government Association of AASU provides funding for each publication. Student submissions are collected through the fall semester for the following year's publication. All submissions are read and chosen through an anonymous process to ensure equal opportunity for every entrant. The Lillian Spencer Awards are presented for outstanding submissions in fiction, poetry, and art. The recipients of this award are chosen by the staff from the student submissions received that year. For more information on submitting, or if interested in working on the Calliope staff, please contact Dr. Christopher Baker in the Languages, Literature and Philosophy department.

Unhinged edition: For this year's Calliope, the editorial board challenged Armstrong to define, through artistic expression, the meaning of "unhinged." Armstrong's writers and artists confidently responded, and although not all submissions were required to relate to the theme or necessarily did, it may be discovered that there is even a tinge of "unhingedness" coursing deep in every work's metaphorical veins, even the most innocent ones. Please enjoy this collaborative rabbit hole into the Unhinged.

cover art:

"Mannequin"
Jeremy Duvall

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Commercial Break

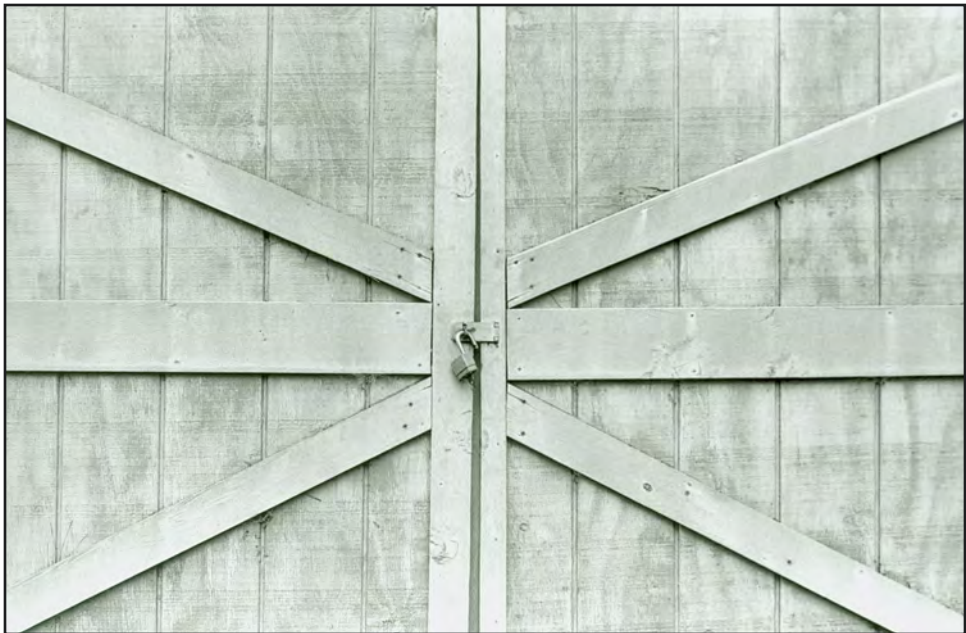
Sitting on your living room couch,
waiting for your show while
watching a commercial for
St. Joseph Candler Children's Hospital.

You know the one,
showing a young boy or girl
wearing a backless hospital gown
suffering from cancer, rare disease, kidney failure.

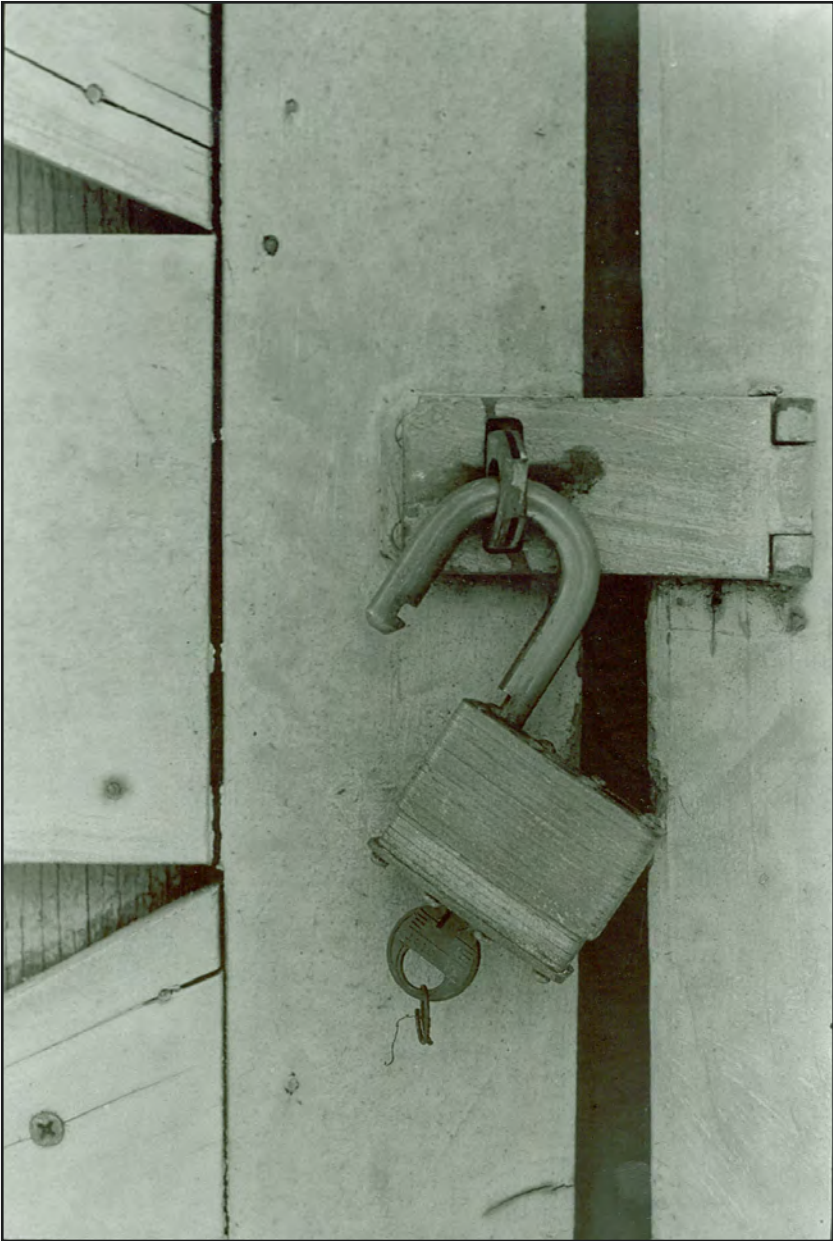
Faceless narrator or famous person
asking you to donate change
digging into your coin jar by
stabbing at your heart.

You suffer through the commercial
stuffing your face with pizza or sandwich
wondering how long you have to wait
wishing that someone would just donate already, so you can
watch your show.

Not Too Secure



Not Too Secure (part II)



Morgan Zilm
Fine Arts
Junior

Personal Reflection

Personal mirrors come nearer to hopeful faces,
as she dabs uncertainly at her prom night pimple:
a blemished pink castle, on the right rosy dimple
that she will check again in thirty-eight seconds,

and still, in twenty two years, when trapped in a
mirrored-door prison, and pressed between sport
coats and sweat suits, skirts, slacks and khakis
swaying slightly together, while passengers mimic
its motions with their casual glances: tethered up
or plunging down;
to hem lines, and zippers, or position of glasses
on the face:
where judgment is kept until the car stops,

at years past superficial fascination: where grey
curls swing carelessly past a once jealous nose,
now crinkling, and flanked by cavernous wrinkling
from a smile, discovered by traversing its bridge,
and looking back on a lifetime-journey of Reflection.

Nathan Krafft
English Communications
Senior

Me-OW!



Dawn DeFrank
Fine Arts
Junior

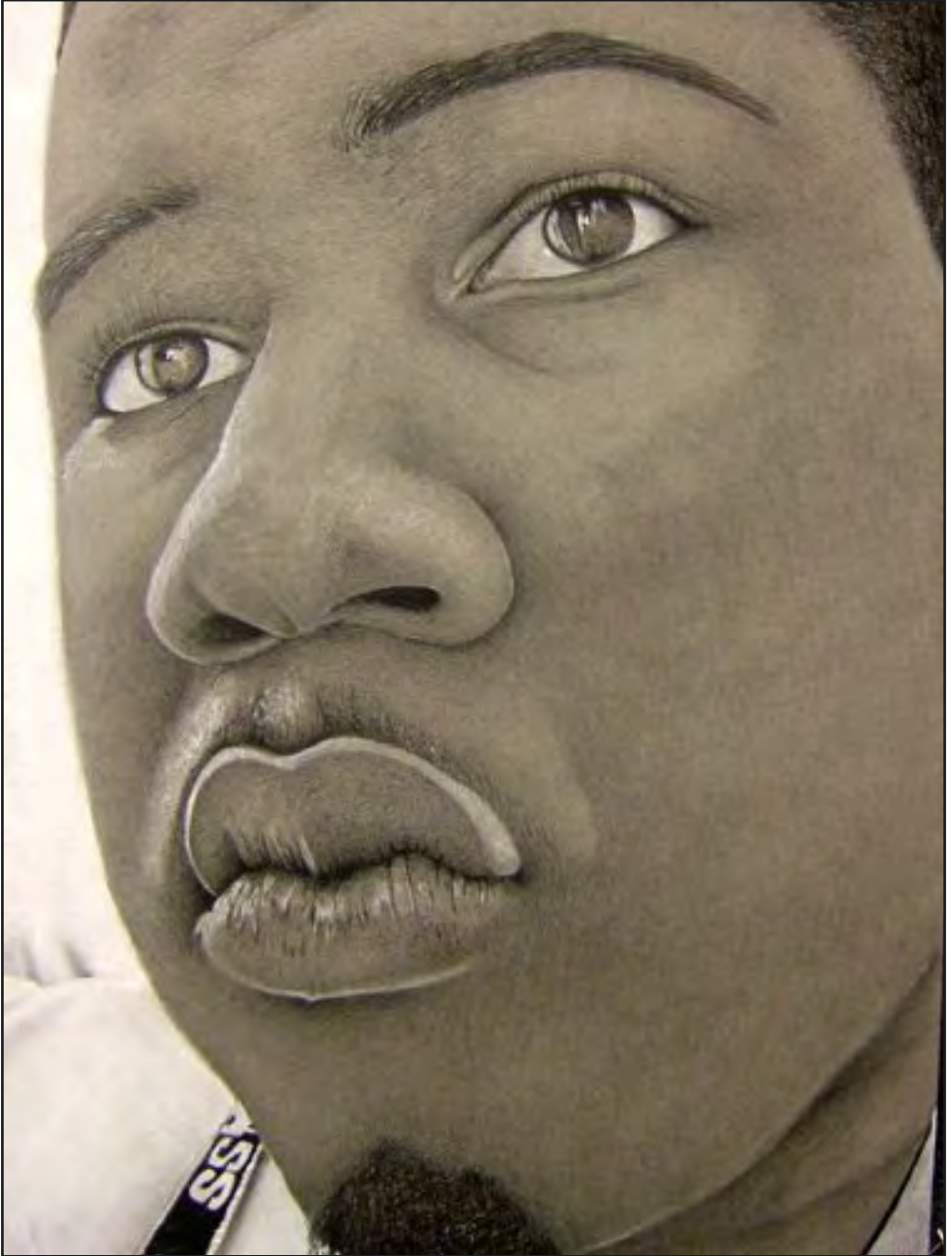
Ghost

I thought you had gone.
One of us had.
It was time, wasn't it?
But my eyelid twitches and there you are
in the doorway,
a persistent child with a laugh,
a watchful mother with a tear
for what is lost.
You'll find it again, I have no doubt.
Underneath the silver sand,
there's no resistance there.

It's easy to dig there.
Look! It's easy to turn this earth
and uncover the secrets of ancient days,
ancient loves.
Underneath, there you are again,
blurring the annals of everything beautiful,
and out again.
The violet hour you love, when guards are soft
and eyes are misty.
The sun marries the moon
and you prove it once again;
the light is the real illusion.

Ashley Pope
MAT, Early Childhood Ed.
Graduate Student

Up Close and Personal



Andre Johnson
Art
Senior

Barmaid

Her mouth's gone dry
tasting the bitterness of
a lie before she speaks.
Quick.
Blurt it out.
Don't give him time to think.
Just act like everything is
O.K.

He won't be able to tell if
you smile and laugh at his joke.
He'll think he's witty and
such "a great catch"
when really he is slurring
his words so badly she
has no idea what he's saying.

Go ahead,
give him another beer
watch him tilt the cool brown bottle back,
Gone in 60 seconds flat.

Robin Diggs
English Communications
Senior

Omnivore I



Deighton Abrams
Fine Arts
Senior

Belair



Hoyt Ramey
Art
Junior

Borracho

The stench of tequila washed
over him as the sweat dipped
from the tip of his nose. His
mouth left ajar for the liquid
to drool and pool below, near
his once brand new shoes,
recently worn in and covered
in the mess of a night out;
chunks of chicken stuck to his soles,
a yellow tint appearing without reason,
to his knowledge,
to their once white exterior.

He stumbles to a stop
searching for stability,
eyes fluttering like moths
around a night's bright light,
searching for a way to be one
with the object of their affection
yet his is nowhere to be found.
He sprawls on the dark concrete,
becoming a piece of the man-made
ground, unnatural and unforgiving
like the woman that made him
want to take that first shot of tequila,
while his shoes remained a pure white,
still new and unaware of the dirty
world around them.

Kasey Stewart
English Communications
Senior

The Philosopher



Deighton Abrams
Fine Arts
Senior

Squeeze Don't Pull

My dad taught me to shoot
when I was eight. We'd drive,
every weekend, with my sister
and a couple rifles to the goat farm
where the man who only ate cactus
lived. We'd set out targets and wait
for the goats to amble by, which I saw
no humor in; I was very serious on the range,
hot or cold, elbow on a sack of flour,
glasses too big, jacket too big, everything
too loud through the disconnected headphones
that threatened to slide off lazily with every
violent kickback of the gun, as if in defiance
of everything those weekends meant to the
eight year old who should have been a boy.
My dad's eyes were always little, angry slits
even when he wasn't angry, like when he was
concentrating or thinking or squinting.
And he was the greatest man alive, and a great shot,
so I'd squint and think and make my eyes angry,
little slits and squeeze the trigger at
the metal outline of a chicken and
watch it fly.

Violet Butler
Psychology
Junior

Lillian Spencer Award for art

Smoking Gun





**Lisa Co
Fine Arts
Junior**

Chicken One Day, and Feathers the Next

It was six in the evening on a Tuesday, and Donald Simpson was watching his father die of cancer. Donald had been dancing with the six o'clock glare that was meandering through the gap in the curtains, and with one six inch slide of his chair at a time, now sat closer to his father than he had in years. He stared at his father's face, looking for the similarities that people always talked about. He didn't find them.

Cancer. Of course cancer.

When you smoke cigarettes for thirty some odd years, you get cancer. It seemed so straightforward that Donald couldn't figure out why people were so surprised. *He is so young*, they would say. *Young?* Youth is something you're born with, and it never appreciates. Young is a new car. By just driving it off the lot you've lost money on it, and you will continue to lose money as long as you own it, but just *how* much depends on how well you take care of it. Donald's old man didn't treat his car very well. He soaked the thing in booze and smoked a pack a day inside of it. It didn't matter how old the car really was anymore, because it was no longer young.

With little to do but think, Donald paced the skin of the room. Community hospitals. You spend your last few days here; the least you could expect was a fresh coat of paint on the walls. And how did they manage to smell like piss-soaked potpourri? It was enough to make Donald nauseous for the first few minutes, until he settled into it and began to breathe. He hated hospitals, *hated* them. And he wasn't too keen on his father at the moment, for pulling him into one.

Goddamnit Dad, Goddamn.

The hardest part was fighting off the urge to be mad at him. He never listened to anyone's advice. Like when he left Donald's mother while Donald was in college. Donald and his brother begged him to turn around, not for them, and not for

their mother, but for the sake of reason. *Don't be unreasonable Dad, if you still want to leave next week, then leave, but don't blow out of town with the fucking evening breeze.* It didn't work, and he left anyways, bound for the west coast and his brother with whom he shared a small apartment and meager wages. Donald wanted to forget those things, and just mourn for the imminent passing of his father, but he couldn't, nor would he even if he could. *You can't reach everyone,* Donald had often explained to his brother, and to himself. You don't just get a pass for being an asshole.

But, that dying man was at one time so important to Donald. Like the time he sat in the police station, sixteen years old, trying to look like he cared about what the officer was telling him about respect and authority. Harold Simpson walked in, grabbed Donald, and led his son out into the idling truck he illegally parked, half on the curb, half on the NO PARKING lines clearly marked on the pavement. His father never did care much for the police. During the drive home, he turned the radio off and spoke to his son with such raw disappointment that Donald almost cried to empty his heart some. *You know kid, tough times don't last, but tough people do. Now get your shit together.* Sure, it was cliché, and it was hypocritical, but it was exactly what Donald needed. It was just the type of wisdom that sophisticates over time, like the whiskey in Donald's pantry that he got as a wedding gift. And when Donald found himself in the dark ethical corridors of his mid-twenties, it was that advice that he often clung to like a moral life preserver. Harold Simpson was a good guy, somewhere in there.

But he wasn't a *great* guy.

He was a guy who dropped out of high school and casually used drugs well into his forties. He was a guy who had at times walked the line between passionate husband and abusive spouse. He was a guy who drank until the moment he fell asleep with a lit cigarette, and drank during his lunch break to make sure he stayed good and saturated with Budweiser and malt whiskey. He was *that* guy, on most days.

On other days, he was a guy who never missed a Little League game. He was a guy who used to take extra time teaching Donald the mechanics of swinging a bat. He was a guy who used baseball as a metaphor for almost everything in life. *Bottom of the ninth, full count, chance to be a hero,* worked for everything from senior prom to Donald's

driving exam. His Dad really could be that guy sometimes, and Donald missed having *that* guy in the dugout.

He was so poignant when he wanted to be. Like when Donald struck out three times the night his grandmother braved the cool air of the fall to watch her last Little League game, wearing her knit cap because the chemo had scourged the brown curly hair from her head, and cheering for Donald with all of the air left in her lungs. Donald hung his head and fought off tears when he hugged his grandmother. She didn't notice. But his Dad, who knew baseball, and knew life, patted him on the back and told him, *tough game buddy, chicken one day, and feathers the next.*

Chicken one day, and feathers the next.

Donald's eyes began to well up with tears, watching his father waste away in that bed. *Is this it? One minute you're living as fast as possible, making noise and seeking stimulus, and the next, you're withering away in a hospital bed, trading a cold beer and a joint for an IV and a bag of piss taped to the side of your leg?* The tears fell. A good few of them. Donald wiped them away and moved to the window, trying to shrug the gravity off of his shoulders.

He looked out to the west. The sun was slipping into the foothills. Shrubbery and trees took bites of its brilliant orange glow like ants overtaking a grapefruit. *God, if Sisyphus had a baseball bat, would he have kept on swinging? I am supposed to do something here, but what? The count is full and I have no fucking clue what's coming next. Why couldn't he have told me that it would be like this one day? Because he was too busy getting fucked up and pissing his pants. What a loser. It shouldn't hurt this bad to watch him go. I should just pull the plug myself and walk right out to my car, right back to my normal life. End this pathetic saga. I don't owe him a goddamned thing.*

He curled his fingers into a tight ball and felt the heat of rage behind his ears. There was so much he wanted to say to his Dad. *You did enough. You were sufficient.* What kind of fucking epitaph would that make? Donald wanted to punch a hole through the wall to let the pressure escape. He would just keep punching until he could squeeze his body out and then run as far as he could. A younger Donald might have. But he didn't run. He took a breath instead, and he closed his eyes.

His dad came home from work once with a broken finger. He

had broken it at 9:30 in the morning and finished the workday. He swung a hammer all day with that busted, crooked finger. Went right back into work the next day with a cup of coffee and a splint. And he did that, every day, for all those years, and he never complained, because Donald and his brother needed to see it. They needed to see that to become men one day. First they learned the laws of baseball. Then they learned the laws of manhood.

God to have that diligence, to have that kind of patience at the plate. To stare down the pitcher, that far behind in the count, and look so poised on the outside, regardless of what was happening inside. Donald had learned so many things from that. He saw it his whole life. With every glaring mistake his father had made, for every time he swung at a bad pitch in the dirt, he would put one into the center field gap and run like hell for third base. Sometimes Donald forgot about those, because Donald's old man went about his life earnestly and with remarkable patience. He just dusted himself off and stepped back up to the plate.

In baseball, a guy can fail seven of ten times and be considered a success, as long as he kept on swinging. And suddenly, Donald began to appreciate the kind of man it took to consistently step into the batter's box during a slump. The feeling quieted the roar in his head and replaced it with a surprising tranquility. He had a moment of realization. Donald had to get up, he needed to focus, and he needed to dig in the way his father would have. People used to rally around his old man because of his knack for that. *No excuses, no bullshit. Just get in there, see some pitches, and hit the shit outta one.*

Donald sat back down in the chair next to his father, and eased into his new role. It was clear now; his Dad had swung for the last time, and was headed into the final stretch of his life. What a hell of a show it had been. Donald spent the rest of the night, in his chair, recounting the game that had taught him so much, and remembering his Dad for how he played it.

It was just like he had told him it would be, all those years ago. Chicken one day, and feathers the next.

Bryan Rippee
Applied Physics
Sophomore

Hand Mixer



Dawn DeFrank
Fine Arts
Junior

Pie



Jeremy Duvall
Visual Art
Senior

Mr. Hudson



April Godfrey
Libral Studies
Senior

Neil Patrick Harris

Zoey: twenty-one; Bridget's roommate

Bridget: twenty-one; Zoey's roommate

Jason: twenty-three; Bridget's boyfriend

Neil Patrick Harris: thirty-eight; the celebrity

Setting: Zoey and Bridget's apartment. Couch in center stage. A side table with lamp and remotes stage right, next to couch. A television sitting in front of the couch with its back facing audience. A table stage left diagonally behind couch. Doors stage left and stage right.

Walking into apartment from stage left.

ZOEY: I just can't believe it. He wouldn't do that to me.

BRIDGET: *(shuts the door)* You don't even know him.

ZOEY: It was our destiny to end up together. We would meet one day.

BRIDGET: You've got to come to grips with it. Honestly, I don't know how you've lived this long without knowing.

ZOEY: *(covers ears)* Blah, blah, blah. I refuse to accept it.

BRIDGET: Zoey, for the last time, Neil Patrick Harris is gay!

ZOEY: Not NPH! Bridget stop it. You're going to make me cry.

BRIDGET: He's married and everything.

ZOEY: What? Lies!

BRIDGET: Look, I'll show you. *(takes out her phone and scrolls through)* His name is David Burtka. See here he is. *(hands the phone to Zoey)*

ZOEY: He's hot, too? That's just not fair. *(hands Bridget back the phone)*

BRIDGET: They have twins too. Look at this one. *(Bridget shows the phone to Zoey)*

ZOEY: They used a surrogate? I could have been their surrogate. Just knowing there was a little piece of him inside me would have been enough.

BRIDGET: That's disgusting. And you wonder why you're still single. *(places phone in pocket)*

Zoey plops down on the couch, crosses her arms across her chest and pouts. Bridget sits down on the opposite side of the room and begins to study. Zoey grabs the radio remote from the side table and presses play. Adele's Someone Like You begins to play.

Never mind, I'll find someone like you/ I wish nothing but the best for you too

ZOEY: Don't forget me, I beg.

BRIDGET: Oh God please stop. Watch a movie or something, please.

ZOEY: Well, there's always Harold and Kuh-mar-har-har-har *(she starts to cry before she can finish the word)*

BRIDGET: Will you calm down? He didn't die, he's just gay. You look awful. Get a tissue.

ZOEY: Why bother? It's not like Neil Patrick Harris is going to be at that door.

A knock comes from the door. Zoey and Bridget look at each other with shocked expressions.

BRIDGET: That couldn't be. Could it?

ZOEY: I need a tissue! *(Zoey wipes her eyes)*

BRIDGET: *(opens the door)* Neil Patrick Harris?

ZOEY: What?

BRIDGET: Ha ha, just kidding. It's Jason. Come on in Jason.

Jason enters stage left.

JASON: That wasn't the greeting I was expecting. Are you cheating

on me with Neil Patrick Harris? I thought he was gay.

ZOEY: It's official, my life is over!

BRIDGET: *(to Jason)* She just realized Neil Patrick Harris is gay.

JASON: Oh, you finally made the connection that if you threw your self on him he wouldn't want you.

ZOEY: Shut up, Jason. Everybody hates you. I'm going to my room!
(exit stage right)

JASON: *(to the door)* Hopefully never to be heard from again.

BRIDGET: Jason, you really are terrible sometimes.

JASON: I'm terrible? She's terrible! How long has this conversation about Neil Patrick Harris been going on, honestly?

BRIDGET: Probably, about an hour.

JASON: See, that's exactly what I'm talking about. That is just ridiculous. And honestly, being "obsessed" with Neil Patrick Harris you would think she would know he's gay.

BRIDGET: Leave her alone. Her heart's in the right place.

JASON: Bridget, this is plenty of proof. You need to move out.
Come live with me.

BRIDGET: Don't start that nonsense again.

JASON: It's not nonsense and stop sounding like an adult for five seconds and make a rash, emotional, immature decision.

BRIDGET: I can't leave Zoey. We're been roommates since freshman year. We're best friends.

JASON: If she is your best friend, then I'm sorry. *(sits down on the couch)*

Zoey enters stage right with a Spiderman themed blanket wrapped around her shoulders.

JASON: I didn't know you liked Spiderman.

ZOEY: I didn't until I found out NPH played Spiderman's voice in the new cartoon.

JASON: *(rolls his eyes)* Could you just be normal for five seconds?

ZOEY: Nope. It would put a strain on my thinking muscles. *(pause)*
Bridget will you make me a hot chocolate? They have a very therapeutic effect on me. *(sits on the couch)*

BRIDGET: Sure. *(exit back stage left)*

JASON: What? *(to Zoey)* Make your own hot chocolate!

ZOEY: Bridget always makes me hot chocolate when I'm not feeling good. *(grabs remote from table and begins to change channels)* Nothing good is on.

JASON: And by good you mean *How I Met Your Mother*.

ZOEY: Of course. What else?

JASON: Go back. I like that show.

ZOEY: What show?

JASON: That one. *The Big Bang Theory*. It's awesome I love it.

ZOEY: They look weird.

JASON: Oh, you're prejudiced against your own kind now?

ZOEY: Shut up. You suck.

BRIDGET: *(enters with hot chocolate)* Stop it now! Just shut up and watch the show.

Zoey and Jason exchanged shocked glances. The lights go out and then come back on.

BRIDGET: *(looks at her watch)* Oh my. Has it really been two hours?

JASON: Shit! We've got reservations for dinner. Come on Bridge, let's get going. *(exit stage left)*

BRIDGET: Zoey, do you want to come?

ZOEY: *(eyes not leaving the TV)* No, I'm fine. Go have fun.

BRIDGET: Ok... *(exit stage left)*

Lights go down. Zoey falls asleep. Neil Patrick Harris enters from stage right.

NEIL: Zoey... Zoey... *(Zoey stirs)* ZOEY! *(lights go on and Zoey wakes)*

ZOEY: Neil Patrick Harris? *(fixing her hair)* How did you get in here? And why are you riding a white horse?

NEIL: Because, Zoey I'm the Neil Patrick Harris from your subconscious: I've not only suited up, but saddled up!

ZOEY: Dang. Isn't that just perfect? *(pause)* Are you here to sweep me off of my feet and carry me off into the sunset to live happily ever after?

NEIL: Um, not really, it's a rental.

ZOEY: At least ask me to marry you?

NEIL: Even better: I've come to show you the true meaning of life.

ZOEY: The true meaning of life? What?

NEIL: It is not wise to dwell on dreams and forget about life.

ZOEY: Isn't that from Harry Potter?

NEIL: Yes it is, just go with it. Zoey, you need to stop obsessing over me and live a fulfilling life in your own reality. You deserve to be with someone real, someone in your life, someone better than me.

ZOEY: Better than you? That's insane.

NEIL: You're probably right, maybe just someone who doesn't like men then? The point is, it's time to grow up Zoey. Find your own one true love.

ZOEY: But how will I know when I find him?

NEIL: Trust me Zoey, you'll know. It will be pure and beautiful and Legend... wait for it... Dairy

(sounds of footsteps)

Oh-no, someone's coming! They must have been summoned by my awesomeness. I must go!

ZOEY: No. If you're a figment of my imagination, I can tell you when to leave and I command you to stay.

NEIL: Normally yes, but I have to go lead another brief journey of self-discovery for Jim Parsons. *(pause)* Just remember Zoey, find someone in your life you really love... Onward Philip! *(exit stage right)*

Bridget enters stage left

BRIDGET: *(to off stage)* Goodnight Jason. Be safe.

ZOEY: Bridget, you're already home? Dinner must have been dull.

BRIDGET: What are you talking about? It's midnight.

ZOEY: Oh, is it? I didn't notice.

BRIDGET: *(pause)* Did you fall asleep watching *The Big Bang Theory*? I didn't think you would have taken to it so well. Jason will be pleased.

ZOEY: Who cares about Jason!? Neil Patrick Harris came to me in a dream—

BRIDGET: That's ridiculous.

ZOEY: But, it's true. He told me I needed to find someone new.

Some guy named Jim Parsons?

BRIDGET: Isn't that Sheldon from Big Bang Theory?

ZOEY: Sheldon? Of course, no wonder Neil Patrick Harris had to go see him; he's probably telling him all about me!

BRIDGET: Did Jason slip something into your hot chocolate?

ZOEY: No, it all makes perfect sense now! I realize how childish of me it was to care about Neil Patrick Harris so much. We don't even have anything in common, but me and Sheldon. That's perfect.

BRIDGET: You mean Jim Parsons.

ZOEY: Yeah, yeah something like that. You know, Sheldon and I are really compatible on an atomic level. He's incredibly smart and sophisticated just like me. Maybe I should change my major to physics.

BRIDGET: Sheldon and Leonard have a roommate contract. I think we might need one, because I didn't sign up for this.

ZOEY: That's not a bad idea. I'll start drafting one just after I start my research. I wonder when Sheldon's birthday is... Just remember, if we get superpowers, you'll have to be my sidekick.

Bridget rolls her eyes.

Bridget, can you teach me how to be smart? I don't think I'm smart enough to be with Sheldon. I wish I would have cared about this sooner. Imagine how smart I could be if I had only applied myself.

BRIDGET: Imagine how smart you would be if you thought about anything other than fictional characters.

ZOEY: Maybe I would have graduated college at 15 like Sheldon did. Maybe I could be studying how the depths of the universe are tied into tiny bouncy strands. Maybe I could have a group of friends that likes to come over and eat take out foods. Have you noticed how much food they eat on that show? It's insane!

BRIDGET: Maybe it's time for bed.

ZOEY: Don't worry about me staying up too late. I know what I'm doing. Goodnight Bridget, or maybe I should start calling you Leonard. *(exit stage right)*

Bridget starts to clean up the living room.

ZOEY: (*from backstage*) What? He's gay too?! I can't catch a break.

BRIDGET: Ah, I need a new roommate.

La Mujer Puede Luchar Con Los Hombres



Marianismo Burden



Yolanda Perez
Fine Arts
Senior

Backward

The best words are about death.
Maybe it's the mystery of the suddenness;
there and suddenly not—
and no one knows the answer.
Only that your waxen face doesn't reflect
the light anymore.

I saw you lying there, tragedy in a suit,
gone but still there somehow—
gone but still there.

After filling and emptying two wombs,
the beginning is less mysterious than the end.
It should be the other way around.
It should be the other way.

Ashley Pope
MAT, Early Childhood Ed.
Graduate Student

Heavy

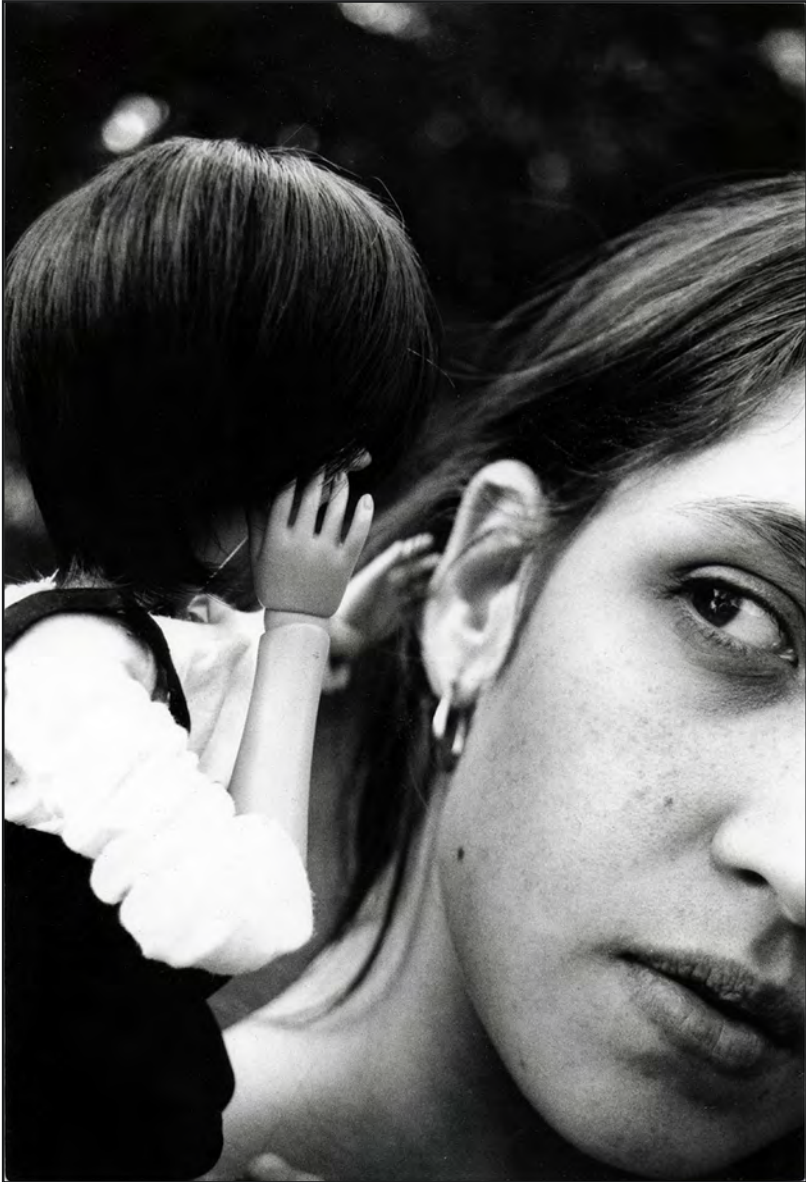
I feel the weight of the world in every feather;
every leaf that touches lightly to the earth—
a cannonball.

Perhaps it is the lack of words
or the lack of ears to hear them—
empathy has no value down here.

The Balance Between My Wonderland and Reality



The Balance Between My Wonderland and Reality (II)



Nekecia Barnes
Fine Arts
Senior

Agoraphobia

The far-off cries and shouts
reverberated through the dark
cold night from an anxious crowd
of footballers and audience
in an overly lit middle school park,
where the fog was illuminated
like canon smoke against
the starless black dome,
pulling to mind the ghostly voices
of spelunkers in a cave,
that bombardment of tongues,
like the chaotic echoing innards of hell.

J. Godfrey
English
Senior

Bury Me Among the Rocks and Roots



Deighton Abrams
Fine Arts
Senior

Behind the Smile

This is a piece taking on a psychological perspective of how the Joker became who he is, due to a dark childhood. This is partially an allusion to The Dark Knight (Christopher Nolan, 2008).

“I haven’t always had this smile on my face.
I was happy once.”
This nimble child used to scurry and play,
dancing outside with the sun rays.
My friends called me by a name,
but I forget it now...

Growing up, my life was like walking on an invisible minefield.
I couldn’t take one step without my father exploding.
When his face turned red, he beat mine blue.
All the shouting and abuse made me afraid to move.
You know, the irony is when he got drunk,
as I stared at him,
shaking like an addict,
he would always close in and ask me,
“Why so serious?”
with the stench of brandy on his breath,
burning into my eyes.

His eyes were cloaked in the dark,
except the left one made of glass...
I couldn’t help staring at the glass bulb in his socket,
but oh, he didn’t like that,
so he squeezed and shook my puny neck,
yelling, “Look at me!”
He released a menacing chuckle
behind his muddy dip-stained teeth,
then he pummeled me into slumber.

Justin Toney

English Communications

Senior

Mother sang inoculating lullabies to ease my pain,
healing the inflicted scars on my skin,
as I lay in bed of my frigid room.
She smelled like fresh chamomile.
Her sweet voice eased my frown,
her tender consoling molded it into a grin.

My parents had me groomed.
One would rub me gently to sleep,
the other would crack me till I bled.
I was empty in this house full of inner demons.
Insanity became my imaginary friend,
the only one who could mask my screams.

One night, father said my smile wasn't big enough,
so he dug his rusty razor into my cheeks,
slicing side to side,
squeezing my face as I bled,
asking me, "Why so serious?"
Mother shrieked and cried as she charged to stop him,
but he grabbed her, then he gave her a smile like mine.
We became one big happy family.

However, my friends ran from my new smile.
Mother refused to look at me,
no longer singing me lullabies,
cutting the remainder of my heart.
I laughed in the mirror, looking at my scars.
Father's sense of humor crept into me.

I have this insane smile on my face,
because I was happy once.
Now that same rusty razor engraves my victim's lips.
The cuts and blows that didn't kill me
simply made me...stranger,
because now, I laugh at the agony of others

Cry-A-Bye Baby

afraid to live
with vanishing dreams
and terrifying regret,
she collects her memories
and throws some away.

she once was pretty
and now, she's aged a bit.
having grown so transparent,
she's overwhelmed with self-doubt.
c-c-constantly t-t-trying to sp-sp-spit it out.

fingers red while on razors edge.
shakey hands and knuckles split.
with a blow to the head she'd be dead,
she could sleep.
cry-a-bye baby,
afraid to die,
all she can do is weep.

Hilary Cassidy
English
Junior

Woven



Rachel Greneker
Fine Arts
Senior

Alone in My Window

These four walls stand guard before me, silently
With the beauty of the fields and the heavens above remaining
out of reach
Narrow and vertical brothers of deep earth refined
Fixed strong together prevent my crossing over the threshold
into the outer realm
I cherish more than life, beyond what an unappreciative many
have carelessly beheld
Dancing souls I see, only but a rare teasing glimpse
For soon they fade away without sight or a scent

Confuse me you may with the demons who lurk this tyrannical
dungeon
Mine host is a neighboring tenant of who shares this cursed
fate among them
The living truth proves arduous for me to consume
So I create scenes of undead lies to escape my tomb
Sometimes, when I dream I forget where I exist
Playing the good life cinemas with my favorite actress
As much chance allots me, I press rewind in my mind
Vainly turning a blind eye to the verity of my plight

I have been consumed by the Hart of darkness
Forbidden to return to the world of innocence
I reside in my “soulitary” confinement
Though I attempt to escape,
outsiders refuse to accept me from the trap of this basement
Forced to realize that my life shall be marked as an obscure
ominous outcast
I pray every night that a miracle would save me from this type-
cast...

Justin Toney

English Communications

Senior

Before my conversion, because by that time it will be too late
I will no longer be in haste of my wait

My only regret is that I have brought shame to my mother
I am dubious that I shall acquire the resolve
To forgive myself for the anguish & disappointment
That I could tell she felt as I looked at her
So now, I attempt to drown myself in the silence that is no longer present
Sounds that are given by those who refuse to believe that their minds
have also been arrested
One screams a scream that of a thousand screams
One more weeps himself in hopes of dreams to sleep
Another shouts cries of MURDER & MALICE to his enemies

Some will see the light
Many others shall battle that endless fight in spite
But all that I see...are over a thousand enslaved souls
Hopeful, that of a feat-less goal...
Freedom

Looking Out the Window



Andre Johnson
Art
Senior

Grey Ghost



Cailey Sparks
Psychology
Junior

Forgotten



Jeremy Duvall
Visual Art
Senior

3 Wise Men



Lisa Co
Fine Arts
Junior

Unhinged Award

Breaking Point



Nekecia Barnes
Fine Arts
Senior

